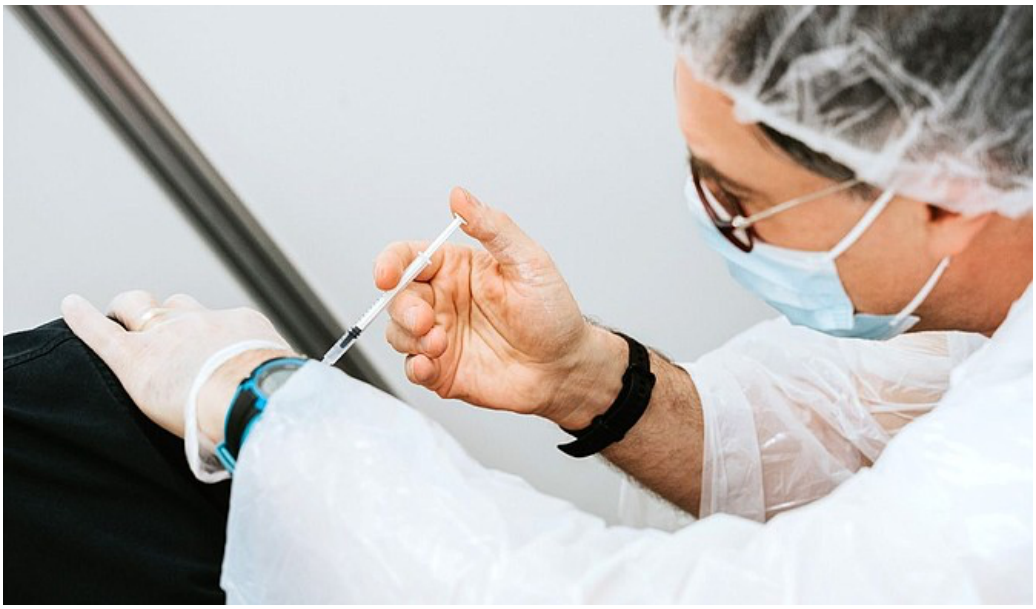
Some Workers Protest Mississippi Hospital's COVID Vaccine Mandate



Some employees are protesting a Mississippi hospital's mandate that all of its workers get vaccinated against COVID-19, even as the state has one of the lowest vaccination rates in the U.S. and has experienced a sharp increase in coronavirus cases the past several weeks. Photo courtesy Mat Napo Unsplash

By The Associated Press

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OXFORD, Miss. (AP) — Some employees are protesting a Mississippi hospital's mandate that all of its workers get vaccinated against COVID-19, even as the state has one of the lowest vaccination rates in the U.S. and has experienced a sharp increase in coronavirus cases the past several weeks.

Baptist Memorial Healthcare is requiring that all of its employees — including those at Baptist Memorial Hospital North Mississippi — be vaccinated against COVID-19 by Nov. 1, the Oxford Eagle reported.

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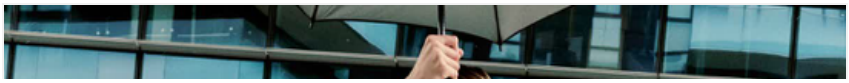

The newspaper reported that more than 100 people, including children, joined the demonstration on a sidewalk Wednesday outside the hospital in Oxford. As cars passed, protesters chanted, “Hear our voice. Mandate Choice."

The hospital issued a statement in response to the protest, saying the vaccine mandate in the best interest of employees and the community.

Nurse Informaticist Lacy Cunningham, who has worked at the hospital about 12 years, said she cannot get vaccinated for health reasons. She said she is not against the COVID-19 vaccinations and others in her family have received them, but she believes people should make their own medical decisions.

Cunningham said the mandate is insulting to many Baptist Memorial employees, and she wants the hospital to repeal it.

“We need a little bit more respect, especially with what these nurses and healthcare workers have been through over the past year,” Cunningham said. “It’s a big slap in the face. You trust me to take care of you and make medical decisions and actions that take care of you, but you don’t trust me to make medical actions and decisions to take care of myself.”

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The hospital's statement acknowledged some employees oppose the vaccination requirement. It said the hospital will have a process for employees who cannot get the vaccine for health reasons or other reasons, similar to the process it follows for its flu vaccine requirement.

“While they have the right to voice their opinions, we have a responsibility to provide the safest environment for our staff members and patients, many of whom are vulnerable and immunocompromised,” the hospital statement said. “Given we are in the midst of the greatest health care crisis of our generation, we made the decision that we believed to be in the best interest of our entire team, patients and community at large.”

The University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson is also requiring all of its employees to get vaccinated against the virus by Nov. 1.

Mississippi has nearly 3 million residents. The state Heath Department said Mississippi has had more than 443,500 cases of COVID-19 and more than 8,500 deaths from it since the pandemic began in the spring of 2020. The state reported 3,850 new cases Thursday.

About 52% of U.S. residents and 39% of Mississippi residents are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, the state Health Department said.

The department also said that between Aug. 5 and Wednesday in Mississippi, 99% of the new COVID-19 cases, 86% of the COVID-19 hospitalizations and 87% of the COVID-19 deaths in the state during those dates were in unvaccinated people.

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Well if they don't take the vaccine and they show up to the hospital send them back home. Then the hospital worker's won't have to get vaccinated. Now if the hospital worker's don't want to get vaccinated let them pay for their weekly testing out of their OWN POCKET.

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js1976 Nat Turner • 19 days ago

So if a large enough percentage of staff don't want to take it they can't just send them back home. Last year people applauded healthcare workers, now people like yourself want them to pay our of their OWN POCKET?

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